

# READY FOR TOMORROW SPRING NEWSLETTER



HILLIARD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

APRIL 2026



## **Our Community, Our Schools** **A Message from the Superintendent**

Hilliard City Schools continues to be a district our community can be proud of, and that success is made possible through the shared commitment of our students, staff, families, and community partners.

At the heart of our work is a focus on academic achievement and student growth. For the second consecutive year, Hilliard City Schools has been ranked #1 in Ohio for Value-Added, a measure that reflects how much academic progress students make over the course of a school year. This distinction speaks to the dedication of our teachers and staff, who work every day to ensure that every student is learning, growing, and reaching their full potential.

We recognize that emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, are rapidly shaping the future of education. In Hilliard, we are approaching this work thoughtfully and proactively. A dedicated AI task force—made up of teachers, administrators, and industry experts—is already working to identify best practices for classroom use, guide curriculum decisions, and recommend policies for the Board of Education. We are excited about the opportunities this technology can bring to enhance learning, while remaining grounded in what matters most: strong relationships and high-quality instruction. AI will never replace the impact of our outstanding teachers, but it can be a powerful tool to support and extend the work they do every day.

While academic success is essential, what makes Hilliard truly special is the strength of our community partnerships. Throughout this newsletter, you will read about just a few of the many programs and collaborations that support our students—from local businesses and civic organizations to volunteers and community groups who invest their time and resources in our schools. These partnerships expand opportunities for students and help connect learning to the world beyond the classroom.

We are also incredibly grateful to our community for supporting the district's Master Facilities Plan. Your support allows us to build and renovate school facilities that meet the needs of today's learners while preparing for future generations of students. As you will read in the following pages, exciting progress is already underway on several projects designed to create modern, safe, and flexible learning environments for our students.

Public schools are strongest when communities and schools work together. In Hilliard, we are fortunate to have a community that believes in the power of education and continues to invest in the success of our students.

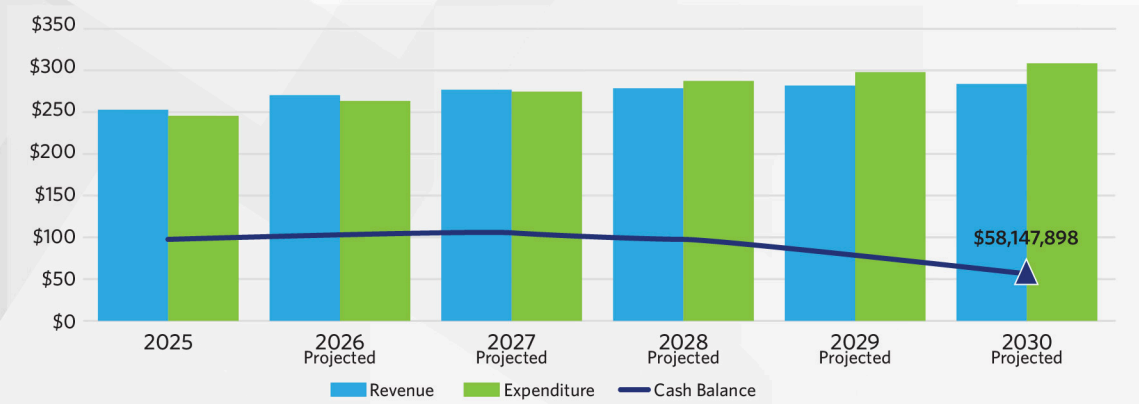
Thank you for your continued partnership and support as we work together to prepare every student for a bright future.

David Stewart  
Superintendent - Hilliard City Schools

# Strong Schools, Responsible Planning: Inside the Five-Year Forecast

## FIVE YEAR FORECAST

Annual Revenue Surplus/(Shortfall) by Fiscal Year



Every public school district in Ohio is required to create and regularly update a financial forecast. This report helps school leaders, and our community understand the district's financial outlook and plan for the future. Recent changes in State law reduce the required projections from five years to four, however the district will continue to include the fifth year as best practice.

Hilliard City Schools updates this forecast twice each year, in October and February, using the most current information available. The forecast focuses on the district's General Fund, which supports the day-to-day operations of our schools—including teacher salaries, classroom supplies, transportation, and student programs.

According to the most recent forecast, the district began the fiscal year with approximately \$97 million in cash reserves. The district anticipates 2 additional years where revenues exceed expenditures, due to careful financial planning and recent community support. These help maintain the district's financial stability.

Like most school districts, approximately 83 percent of expenditures are dedicated to salaries and benefits for teachers, support staff, and other employees who provide essential services to students. Purchased services—such as utilities, transportation, and contracted services—account for about 11 percent, while supplies and materials make up roughly 6 percent.

On the revenue side, about 68 percent of district funding is generated through local property taxes, while roughly 25 percent comes from state funding. The remaining 7 percent includes other sources such as payments related to business development within the community and investment income.

Financial forecasts are designed to help district leaders anticipate future challenges such as rising health care costs, increasing utility expenses, and changes in state funding. By regularly reviewing these projections and sharing them publicly, Hilliard City Schools works to ensure transparency while continuing to provide a high-quality education for every student.

# Blueprint for Tomorrow:

## Building the Future of Hilliard City Schools



**Beacon Elementary School Groundbreaking**

Thanks to strong community support, Hilliard City Schools is moving forward with important facility improvements that will serve students and families for decades to come.

In 2024, voters approved a bond issue that allows the district to invest \$142 million in the first phase of its Master Facilities Plan, known as the "Blueprint for Tomorrow." This long-term plan addresses building needs across the district while preparing for continued growth and evolving educational programs.

That work is already underway. Earlier this year, district leaders, staff, and community members celebrated the groundbreaking for the new Beacon Elementary School. The new building will be constructed on the same property as the current school and will provide modern learning spaces designed to support today's teaching and learning needs while honoring the strong traditions of the Beacon community.

Construction activity is also beginning on the district's new preschool facility, which will expand opportunities for our youngest learners and allow the district to better support early childhood education programs.

In addition, preparations are underway for the construction of a new Brown Elementary School, with work expected to begin soon.

These projects represent just the first steps in a larger, long-term plan to improve facilities across Hilliard City Schools. The plan also includes improvements across the district such as updated playgrounds, enhancements to fine arts and athletic spaces, and important safety upgrades like secured entrances at school buildings.

One key feature of the bond issue is that it maintains the district's existing tax rate for facility debt. Because older bond debt is being paid off, the district is able to issue new bonds while keeping the overall millage for facility improvements at approximately the same level.

The Master Facilities Plan reflects years of planning and input from staff, families, and community members. Together, these investments ensure that Hilliard students will continue learning in safe, modern spaces designed to support their success—today and for generations to come.

# From Seed to STEM:

## Hilliard Students Grow Knowledge Through Hydroponics

Students across Hilliard City Schools are feeding their curiosity through an exciting partnership with The Ohio State University, bringing hydroponics and sustainable agriculture into classrooms from elementary through high school.

Designed for all 16,500 students, this hands-on program connects learning in agriculture, nutrition, and STEM—sparking curiosity in elementary school, building understanding in middle grades, and preparing high school students for careers and industry-recognized credentials.

Each school features a dedicated growing space. In elementary Innovation Discovery Centers, students use hydroponic systems, container gardens, and interactive stations to explore plant life cycles and sustainability. Some crops are even used in school events, cafeterias, or donated to local organizations—helping students see their impact firsthand.

At the middle and high school levels, Media Centers include vertical gardens, hydroponic and aquaponic systems, and traditional growing beds. Students dive deeper into plant science, sustainable practices, and modern agricultural technology while exploring career pathways and workforce skills.

Supported by teachers and specialists across disciplines, the program connects classroom learning to real-world applications while building creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving skills outlined in the district's Portrait of a Learner.

From their first seeds to future careers, Hilliard students are learning that growing plants is just the beginning—growing curiosity, knowledge, and opportunity is the real harvest.





## Walking Through History: Third Graders Explore Downtown Hilliard

Third graders across Hilliard City Schools have the opportunity to take a unique journey through their own community, visiting the Hilliard History Express and several local downtown businesses. This hands-on experience brings social studies standards to life by connecting students directly with the people, places, and stories that shaped their city.

At the History Express, students explored exhibits that highlight Hilliard's past—from its earliest settlers to modern community milestones. They then visited downtown businesses whose owners and staff had researched the history of their buildings and shared stories of how their spaces contributed to Hilliard's growth over time.

This authentic learning opportunity helps students see history not just in books, but all around them—in streets, storefronts, and neighborhoods they encounter every day. It also strengthens partnerships between schools and local businesses, showing students how community members preserve and celebrate Hilliard's heritage.

Teachers and students alike have praised the experience for sparking curiosity, building civic pride, and deepening understanding of how the past shapes the present. By connecting classroom learning with the real world, these field trips help students develop critical thinking skills while creating memories that will last long after the school year ends.

Hilliard's 3rd graders are proving that history isn't just something to read about—it's something to explore, experience, and celebrate, right here in their own city.





## Tomorrow's Teachers Start Here: Academy EDU Inspires Hilliard Students

With teacher shortages affecting schools across the country, Hilliard City Schools is taking proactive steps to support the next generation of educators—starting right here in our community. The Academy EDU program gives high school students an authentic introduction to the teaching profession while allowing them to gain hands-on experience in our own classrooms.

Through Academy EDU, students complete 100+ hours of classroom observation and engagement, working alongside our talented teachers to learn the day-to-day realities of the profession. They develop key skills such as leadership, communication, classroom management, and social-emotional support, while exploring how culture and community shape learning environments.

"I love being a part of EDU because it has given me the chance to work in an educational setting, gain real experience, and confirm that being a teacher is the path I am most passionate about," said Davidson senior Ella.

The program also emphasizes building strong connections with students, families, and community partners—preparing Academy EDU participants not only to teach, but to lead with empathy and understanding. Students experience the organizational structure of schools, learn about curriculum development, and practice creating safe and supportive classrooms for all learners.

By providing these experiences within Hilliard schools, Academy EDU allows students to explore teaching as a career in a familiar and supportive setting. Many students leave the program inspired to pursue education as a profession, bringing passion, preparation, and a deep understanding of what it takes to be an effective teacher.

Academy EDU reflects Hilliard's commitment to investing in students today to strengthen our schools tomorrow. By mentoring future educators, we are helping ensure that every classroom in our district benefits from skilled, caring teachers who understand both the community and the students they serve.